

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY ARA/AND/B - MR. TOYRYLA:LEE
APPROVED BY ARA - AMBASSADOR VAKY
S/S-O - TGMARTIN

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EXDIS

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SUBJECT: BOLIVIAN AMBASSADOR MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR VAKY

1. BOLIVIAN AMBASSADOR ITURRALDE CALLED ON AMBASSADOR VAKY JULY 17 TO DELIVER A DEMARCHE. THE VERBAL PRESENTATION, ACCOMPANIED BY AN AIDE MEMOIRE, EXPRESSED THE GOB'S DEEP CONCERN OVER THE DEPARTMENT'S JULY 13 PRESS STATEMENT REGARDING BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS AND SUGGESTED THAT THE ATTITUDE REFLECTED IN THE STATEMENT COULD DAMAGE THE FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. IT ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOB WISHED TO SEE OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS CONTINUE WITHIN THE PRESENT FRAMEWORK OF CORDIALITY AND RESPECT FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERVENTION. IN CLOSING, THE DEMARCHE OFFERED A REMINDER THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES INITIATED THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS BASED UPON THE PRINCIPLES OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND SOVEREIGNTY, WITHOUT EXTERNAL PRESSURE, AND THAT ONLY THE PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS OF

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BOLIVIA ARE QUALIFIED TO JUDGE THE RESULTS.

2. AMBASSADOR VAKY RESPONDED BY EMPHASIZING THAT OUR EXPRESSION OF CONCERN OVER ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS WAS NOT INTENDED AS AN UNFRIENDLY GESTURE. RATHER IT REFLECTED HONEST CONCERN AND WORRY ABOUT WHAT WAS

HAPPENING IN A COUNTRY WITH WHICH WE HAVE VERY CORDIAL RELATIONS. IT WAS NOT IN ANY WAY TO BE SEEN AS INTERFERENCE IN THE DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF BOLIVIA.

3. FOLLOWING THE FORMAL EXCHANGE, ITURRALDE SPOKE ON A MORE PERSONAL AND INFORMAL LEVEL ABOUT THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN BOLIVIA. THE THRUST OF HIS COMMENTS WAS AN ATTEMPT AT RATIONALIZING THE LACK OF EFFORT TO CLEAN UP THE BALLOT COUNTING BY EXPLAINING THE POLITICAL DANGERS THAT CONFRONT THE COUNTRY. HE SAID THAT, FOLLOWING THE SILES/PAZ/BERNAL PACT NOT TO COOPERATE WITH PEREDA FORCES IN THE CONGRESS, PAZ AND BERNAL WERE NOT WILLING TO DISCUSS ANY COOPERATION WITH PEREDA. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, ITURRALDE SAID, A PLURALITY VICTORY BY PEREDA LEADING TO A VOTE IN CONGRESS WOULD ELECT SILES TO THE PRESIDENCY. HE POINTED OUT THAT SILES HAS ONLY GARNERED 20 OF THE POPULAR VOTE AND REPRESENTS EXTREMIST ELEMENTS SUCH AS THE MIR AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY. HE SAID NOT ONLY WOULD SILES NOT BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POPULAR WILL BUT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE MILITARY.

4. ITURRALDE THEN TOUCHED UPON WHAT HE CALLED A MORE PROFOUND PROBLEM. HE NOTED THAT, IN THE ELECTION, PEREDA WON THE LOWLANDS, INCLUDING SANTA CRUZ AND COCHABAMBA, AND THE OPPOSITION TOOK THE ALTIPLANO.
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THIS REPRESENTED, IN HIS OPINION, THE KIND OF UNDERLYING REGIONALISM THAT COULD CONCEIVABLY LEAD TO CIVIL WAR, ESPECIALLY UNDER A WEAK GOVERNMENT.

5. AMBASSADOR VAKY REMINDED ITURRALDE THAT THE INTERNAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS WERE FOR BOLIVIANS TO DEAL WITH AND THAT WE COULD NOT APPROPRIATELY MAKE JUDGMENTS ABOUT THE ELECTION PROCESS BASED UPON SUCH CONCERNS. VAKY RETURNED TO ITURRALDE'S OWN COMMENT THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT CHOSE THE PATH OF DEMOCRACY, AND AMPLIFIED THEM BY ASSERTING THAT THE GOB NOW HAD A COMMITMENT TO THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY TO FOLLOW THROUGH IN THE MOST HONEST MANNER POSSIBLE. VAKY EMPHASIZED THAT THE PROCESS WAS OF GREAT CONCERN TO US.

6. NOTING THAT PRESIDENT BANZER HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE MATTER OF FAIR BALLOT COUNTING, VAKY ASKED IF HE HAD RECENTLY TALKED WITH PAZ OR BERNAL. ITURRALDE RESPONDED THAT BANZER HAD EARLIER SPOKEN WITH BOTH CANDIDATES, BUT THAT SINCE THE THREE-CANDIDATE PACT, BERNAL WAS MAINTAINING HIS DISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

PAZ WOULD NOT DEAL WITH BANZER, HE SAID, BECAUSE OF THE ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THE TWO GROWING OUT OF THE LATTER'S EXILING OF PAZ. ITURRALDE SAID THAT ALL IN ALL IT APPEARED EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO CHANGE THE PRESENT COURSE OF EVENTS. VAKY CLOSED BY WARNING THAT, IF THAT WAS THE CASE, OUR TWO COUNTRIES WOULD, INDEED, ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTIES IN OUR RELATIONS. CHRISTOPHER

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